



News Release from Congressman

ROB SIMMONS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2006

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HOUSE PASSES SIMMONS-COSPONSORED EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Bipartisan Bill Will Improve Communications Between Local, State and Federal First Responders

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, today praised congressional action that will greatly improve the ability of emergency personnel to communicate across organizations in emergency situations. The House today passed H.R. 5852, the “21st Century Emergency Communications Act of 2006,” by a vote of 414 to 2. Simmons is an original sponsor of the legislation.

“One of the lessons learned from the 9/11 terrorist attacks and hurricanes Katrina and Rita is the need for an emergency response system that allows local, state and federal first responders to communicate with each other,” Simmons said. “Today’s action by the House would create a new emergency communications office within the Homeland Security Department to develop a standardized radio system for first-responders during disasters. This was one of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and I’m proud to have been an early supporter of this life-saving legislation.”

The “21st Century Emergency Communications Act of 2006” takes the necessary steps to enhance operable and interoperable emergency communications nationwide in order to better protect the American people. Specifically, the bill creates an office and manager to oversee all emergency communications in this country. The legislation also requires states to establish emergency communication plans and facilitates the coordination of emergency communication regionally among federal, state and local officials. Finally, the House-passed measure provides the tools and framework to establish fully interoperable and operable communications nationwide.

Simmons concluded, “Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the Gulf Coast hurricanes exposed crippling communications problems among our nation’s first-responders. The inability of our first responders to communicate with each other is more than a major concern; it’s a threat to our homeland security. Today’s action in Congress will help our first responders better protect our citizens.”

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